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SUBJECT: VALIDATION STUDY OF IRANIAN B1/B2 APPLICANTS

REF: ANKARA 449

¶1. Summary: Embassy StockholmQs Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) conducted a two stage issuance review and validation study of Iranian B1/B2 visa applicants in 2007. Results show that StockholmQs higher issuance rate reflects a relatively refined applicant pool of doctoral students and wealthy retired Iranians. In addition, ADIS data reveals that over 93 percent of the 2007 B1/B2 Iranian visa holders returned from their U.S. visit without incident and only two overstays. End Summary.

Review of a Very Large Iranian Applicant Pool

¶2. Sweden hosts one of the largest expat Iranian communities in Europe with an estimated 57,000 first generation Iranians out of a total Swedish population of nine million. Many of them live in Sweden for years before obtaining Swedish citizenship. Additionally, Iranians living in Iran often apply for B1/B2 visas in Stockholm while visiting relatives in Sweden. In calendar year 2007, 121 Iranian passport holders applied for B1/B2 visas at Embassy Stockholm. This pool of applicants at Embassy Stockholm fell within three general categories (students, working age (WA) applicants, and retired (RA) applicants) and resided in either Iran or Sweden. The Iranian refusal rate of 40 percent compared favorably to PostQs overall B1/B2 refusal rate of 46 percent in 2007, which was heavily weighted by third country nationals.

Issuance Rates by Employment Status

	Issued (% of Total)	Refused (% of Total)	Total
Students	28 (83 percent)	6 (17 percent)	34
WA	25 (48 percent)	27 (52 percent)	52
RA	19 (54 percent)	16 (46 percent)	35
Total	72 (60 percent)	49 (40 percent)	121

Actual Residence as Defining Refusal Factor

¶3. A closer look at the refusal rates for Iranian B1/B2 applicants shows that working age (WA) and retired (RA) applicants were more often refused when their actual residence was in Iran rather than Sweden.

Issuance Rates for Working Age (WA) Iranian Applicants by Actual Residence

	Issued (& of Total)	Refused (& of Total)	Total
Iran	8 (31 percent)	18 (69 percent)	26
Sweden	17 (65 percent)	9 (15 percent)	26
Total	25 (48 percent)	27 (52 percent)	52

Issuance Rates for Retired (RA) Iranian Applicants by Actual Residence

	Issued (& of Total)	Refused (& of Total)	Total
Iran	14 (50 percent)	14 (50 percent)	28

Sweden	5 (71 percent)	2 (29 percent)	7
Total	19 (55 percent)	16 (46 percent)	35

Although the sample size for retired (RA) Iranian applicants is small, this pattern reflects Stockholm NIVQs conventional wisdom that some Iranian visitors are on a multi-month circuit to see family in Europe and North American before returning to Iran. Others are simply attempting to reunite with children in the United States without pursuing immigrant visas.

Iranian Students: Top of the Class as Travelers

¶4. Iranian students who applied for B1/B2 visas in Stockholm were in a class of their own. In fact, 21 of the 28 issued students were doctoral students in the most competitive science, engineering and medical programs in Sweden. Of the six refusals, two were master degree students with insufficient ties and one was for SAO objection. The remaining three refusals were for doctoral students who missed their academic conference dates because of the lengthy SAO process.

¶5. Post conducted a follow up validation study of the 72 issued B1/B2 Iranian visa holders using ADIS data and assistance from the DHS office in Embassy Copenhagen. The results indicate that only two of 72 applicants overstayed, three properly filed documents to adjust status, and five more did not travel. All of the five non-travelers received B1/B2 visas in 2008 and traveled successfully under those visas. Accordingly, Post can report that 93 percent of the B1/B2 visas issued to Iranians in 2007 were used properly. DHS is currently pursuing the two overstays. Stockholm FPU notes that both overstays had actual residences in Iran and were, respectively, a working age and retired applicant. For more complete data for both the applicant pool survey and the validation study, please

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contact Fraud Investigator Marten Sandmark at sandmarkm@state.gov or Fraud Prevention Manager Dan Mangis at mangisde@state.gov.

¶6. Embassy Ankara recently produced a B1/B2 validation study of Iranian applicants at that post, with relatively similar results (Reftel). Ankara noted in particular that previous travelers to the U.S., older Iranians, and highly educated Iranians were more likely to return. Our data, derived from a relatively selective pool in Sweden, confirms those general patterns.

Conclusion: StockholmQs Iranian Issuances On Target

¶6. Although not statistically definitive, FPU StockholmQs review of PostQs Iranian B1/B2 applicant pool and follow on validation study highlights three key applicant profiles. First, Iranian doctoral-level students at SwedenQs best universities are receiving B1/B2 visas and traveling successfully. Second, working age Iranians visiting relatives in Sweden are not receiving very many B1/B2 visas in Stockholm. Finally, retired Iranians with an actual residence in Iran stand an even chance of receiving a visa out of Stockholm, but travel well. Overall, StockholmQs Iranian B1/B2 issuance decisions in 2007 are validated by a 93 percent return rate and only two overstays. This data substantially corroborates Embassy AnkaraQs recent validation study of Iranian B1/B2 applicants.

SILVERMAN